

## **WEST OF SCOTLAND MASTERS – 24/25 NOVEMBER 2018**

The West of Scotland Masters tournament was held at the Hamilton Squash and Racketball Club on 24/25 November 2018.

There was an initial entry of 86 competitors but following late withdrawals this was reduced to 80 who took part in one Ladies' event and eight Mens' events. **Only three ladies entered – this was really disappointing. We must encourage new and regular Ladies Masters players to enter the remaining three tournaments and this should ensure competition for and strong Scottish Ladies teams for the 2019 Home Internationals.**

Mark Sherrit, John Crawford and the West of Scotland committee managed a very well organised tournament. They all worked hard to make all competitors welcome and the bar and catering facilities were excellent. John Crawford and Mark Adderley presented the trophies. All the competitors enjoyed the event and were grateful to the West of Scotland committee for all their hard work in the organisation and managing the weekend competition.

Thanks are also due to SSRA (Allan McKay and Ross Cairns) and SportyHQ for managing the entry and supporting the West of Scotland committee in running the tournament. John Crawford, Peter O'Hara (senior) and Mike Halpin supported the committee and all the players by providing refereeing services throughout the tournament.

### **Ladies O50**

There were only three competitors and the competition was played as a round robin. The three players were Sue Strachan from Dumfries Squash and Racketball Club, Norma Marshall from Lochaber Squash Club and Bernie Beattie from Dunblane Sports Club.

Sue and Bernie had comfortable 3/0 wins over Norma. The match between Sue and Bernie would decide who would win the title. Sue was the favourite but Bernie flew out the blocks and played some excellent drop shots and won the first game 15/2! Sue showed her experience and in the second game she played solid squash with deep drives and winning drop shots. She won the second game 15/4 and continued to play well and closed out the match in four games and deservedly won the O50 title.

### **MO35**

There were initially four entries but a late call-off reduced the number to three competitors and they played as a round robin.

The three players were Neil Steadman from Edinburgh Sports Club, Andrew Bremner from Thurso Squash Club and Paul Wynne from Cameron House Squash Club. Andrew played at the Grampian Masters in October but this was the first outing of the season for Neil and Paul.

Neil Steadman and Andrew Bremner had comfortable 3/0 wins over Paul Wynne. The match between Neil and Andrew would decide who would win the title. It was a very competitive match and both players had opportunities. Neil started strongly and won the first game 11/7 but Andrew fought back and won the second game to level the match at 1/1. Neil won the third 11/7 and in a close fourth game Andrew won 11/9 to force a final game decider. Andrew won the final game 11/8 and the O35 title.

#### **MO40**

There were 11 competitors and the competition was played as a knock out.

In the first round David McCormick beat Jon-Paul Dinnin and Matthew Morton beat Mark Sherrit. In probably the closest match of the round Malcolm Cameron defeated Paul Wynne in four sets.

In the quarter finals Peter O' Hara and Grant Gray both won 3/0. In the other two matches Scott Hay beat Blair McKenzie 3-1 in a closely fought game. In the last tie of the round Barry Masson had to withdraw with a back injury after being 1/0 up on Matthew Morton.

In the semi finals Grant and Matthew had a gruelling match which lasted over an hour with Matthew coming out on top and winning 3/0. In the other semi Peter beat Scott 3/0.

In the final Peter managed to win 3/0 against Matthew which was a terrific achievement given that he was also competing in the O45!!

In the final of the plate Jon-Paul Dinnin beat Paul Wynne 3/0.

#### **MO45**

##### **UPSETS, REVENGE AND A COMEBACK!**

The dominant force in this age group that is Peter O'Hara (Newlands) made his debut in the 2018-19 Scottish Masters series and, as expected, marched to an impressive victory in Hamilton. A comfortable start for O'Hara saw him send Malcolm Cameron (Whitecraigs) to the Plate while second seed Angus Woodward (Newlands) did likewise to fellow 2018 Home Internationals team mate, John Kynoch of Inverness. The other two quarter final matches were much closer as Chris Turlik (Dollar Squash Club) squeezed past fourth seed, Douglas Emery (Whitecraigs) in five closely fought games. Tayside & Fife champion, Paul Jenkins of Watsonians Squash Rackets Club completed the semi-final line-up but was run close by the in-form Adam Clayton (Linlithgow Squash Club). At 2-0 down, Jenkins looked beaten but rallied and went through in 5.

Clayton's confidence remained high as he knocked Emery out of the competition with a solid 3-1 win to set up a re-match in the Plate Final against Kynoch who defeated Cameron with relative ease. Kynoch had beaten Clayton convincingly at the Grampian Masters in October and Clayton was keen to exact some revenge. Despite squandering a two-game lead yet again, this time Clayton finished the job and emerged as the Plate winner for the second consecutive tournament. A great

weekend's work in defeating two higher ranked players and pushing the second seed all the way.

The first semi-final of the main draw handed Turlik to face the unenviable challenge of O'Hara. An entertaining match (for the spectators!) saw the lower ranked player put through his paces and, as expected, O'Hara secured his place in yet another Masters Final. The second semi was more difficult to predict. Jenkins crafted a well-earned victory over Woodward in the Tayside & Fife Masters in September and Woodward was keen to reassert the dominance he displayed last season. The first game went to the wire with Jenkins edging it 12/10. Thereafter however, Woodward's superior fitness, possibly combined with the effects of Jenkins' earlier encounter with Clayton, saw him ease through to an all-Newlands final.

As usual, Woodward produced a dogged performance and pushed O'Hara hard in the first two games, just losing them 9/11, 10/12. O'Hara cleaned up in the third however and successfully claimed the 2018 West of Scotland Masters (O45). It is well worth noting that O'Hara also won the O40 event this weekend.

Last month's champion in Aberdeen, Peter Buchan (Montrose), was notably absent in Hamilton but apart from him and Simon Boughton (Edinburgh Sports Club), many of the players aiming to make the 2019 Home Internationals were present and the points table is taking shape. The East event in January should see Boughton enter the fray and of course, Jenkins will play his hometown tournament. If O'Hara, Buchan, Woodward and Turlik all join them in Edinburgh, this group might emerge as the six to catch but Emery, Kynoch and Clayton will most definitely be looking to get into the mix!

## MO50

Twelve competitors headed to the hot courts of Hamilton to do battle in the MO50 West Masters competition, kicking off with four matches on Saturday morning.

### *Day 1*

There was smooth passage to the next round for Dave Sheard against Adam Hill, Andy Meldrum against Danny Russell and Craig Mitchell against Donald Durrand, all winning their matches in straight games and conserving energy for subsequent rounds.

By contrast, the remaining tie between David Lindsay and Stuart Mitchell went the distance. Stuart won the first and got very close to taking a 2-0 lead, but was edged out 14/12 in the second game. David had the momentum and won the third, but Stuart fought back well to win the fourth. The fifth was another close game, with David getting over the line 11/9.

Quarter-final matches were played on Saturday afternoon, with seeds 1-4 entering the fray.

Before a ball was hit, the bottom half of the draw was impacted by the withdrawal of second seed Ronnie Carter, who had suffered a hamstring injury playing a MO55 tie, meaning that Craig Mitchell progressed to Sunday's semi-finals.

The other match in that half of the draw was between the two Andys, McCulley and Meldrum. It was Bridge of Allan player Andy Meldrum who prevailed, with an impressive straight games win, 11/8, 11/9, 11/7.

Switching to the top half of the draw, Dave Sheard rallied well against Brian Robertson, but didn't get the rewards in terms of points on the board. The reward for Brian maintaining full concentration throughout was a 3-0 win.

In the remaining tie of this round, David Lindsay found himself in another 5-game match, this time against Colin McMullan. For much of the match, there was little between the players, as indicated by scores of 15/13, 12/10 and 14/12 in three of the games. As for the pattern of the match, Colin took a two game lead before David responded by winning the third and fourth, but it was Colin who finished the stronger with a relatively comfortable 11/7 score in the decider.

### *Day 2*

The semi-final line-up was Brian Robertson against Colin McMullan and an all Bridge of Allan clash between Andy Meldrum and Craig Mitchell.

With Brian one game up and the second game evenly poised, Colin felt aggrieved at some decisions made by the referee - a quick run of points followed that gave Brian the game 11/7 and into a 2-0 lead. With Brian 3-0 up in the next game, Colin conceded the match.

As clubmates, Andy and Craig know each other (and each other's game) pretty well, so it was no surprise that games were close. When Andy won the first and second games to go two up, the writing seemed to be on the wall for Craig, but he proceeded to fight back to win games 3 and 4 to keep his hopes of reaching the final alive. In a final game that went to the wire, Andy had first chance to take the victory, but failed to convert and it was Craig who squeezed home 12/10 for his first competitive win against his opponent.

And so it was that Sunday afternoon's final was between Brian and Craig, who were playing each other for the first time. The first game was relatively close as each player fought for control and tried to identify strengths and weaknesses in his opponent's game, but once Brian had got that game in the bag, he was increasingly able to dictate play. The extent to which their contrasting semi-final matches influenced the outcome of the final is hard to gauge, but it was undoubtedly a factor. As it was, Brian was able to maintain control in the second and third games to win the match and record his first Masters tournament win of the season.

In the Plate Daniel Russell beat David Durrant 3/0 in the final.

Aside from the squash, it was really good to see John Rae at Hamilton, showing the same battling qualities off the court as on it. I'm sure I speak on behalf of all Masters players in wishing him well, including his fight to be fit to play in the 2020 World Masters in Poland as he turns 70!

## **MO55**

After an initial entry of 15, this reduced to 12 after a few call-offs but was still the largest for the season to date. There was some confusion over whether matches were to be played to 11 or 15, with a mixture being adopted on Saturday, but all matches to 11 on Sunday. The top four seeds of Chris Holt, Ronnie Carter, Russell Hunter and Robin Ridley had first round byes. Russell is the new kid on the block, having turned 55 last month.

The first round matches saw comfortable wins for Norman Paterson over Archie Magillivray, and Keith Gristwood over Lance Marshall. The remaining two matches went to the wire: Rolf Hansen had a see-saw game, beating Ricky Easton 3-2 after coming back from 1-2. The other paired David Goldring, fairly new to the circuit, against the experienced Allan Law: Allan took the first but David adjusted his style to take the lead 2-1, before Allan showed his determination to level it, despite still making his way back from a long lay-off; however, he could not sustain this and not helped by some niggling injury, David came through in the fifth.

The quarters saw the top four seeds enter the fray. Chris had a comfortable win over Rolf who had had a tough win in the morning. Robin beat Norman 3-0 although the third was close, tighter than it should have been as they played to 15 rather than 11 which would have made life easier for Robin, considering he was also playing in the M60s. Russell was two up against Keith after clinching the first 12-10; Keith kept the match alive by winning the third before Russell closed it out 3-1, Keith possibly saving himself for the M60s. David seemed unaffected by his earlier 5 setter, taking the first easily against Ronnie before being pegged back to 1-1; David took the lead again but Ronnie levelled for the second time. Unfortunately, Ronnie was being troubled by a hamstring strain so retired before inflicting more damage to let David progress to the semis.

As a result of only five first match losers and three of these not entering the plate, it was a straight final between Lance and Archie, the latter winning 3-0, the game scores being consistent at 11-6 or 11-7.

Back to the semi-finals of the main event which were contested by Chris vs Robin, and Russell vs David. Chris was hoping that Robin would not be going flat out to save energy for his M60 final; this seemed to be the case, Robin conceding a few strokes a game which allowed Chris to maintain overall control to win 3-0, the game scores all being 11-7. Russell was even more controlling in the other semi, beating David 11-4, 11-3, 11-8. So to the final, only the third time that Chris and Russell had played, due in part to a few years difference in age and that Russell often only plays Masters tournaments in the second half. Chris took an early lead in the first but was pegged back by Russell who won it 11-8. The next two games were tight most of the way, Chris edging both by 13-11 and 11-9. The fourth continued in the same vein

until Chris played a few poor shots at the front which Russell easily read to win it 11-7, so two games-all. Russell was the stronger in the fifth taking it comfortably 11-4 to win a hard fought and competitive match.

The events so far have seen three different winners in Chris, Jimmy and Russell, with the other finalist being Ronnie, so all to play for in the New Year.

## **MO60**

There were eight competitors and the competition was played as a knock out.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Round

Robin Ridley v Lance Marshall

Bit of a gulf in ability, Robin won easily 3/0 but allowed Lance to make a game of it.

John Charles v David McAleese

A very tight match and the result could have gone either way, both had periods of dominance but John played a tighter game and went through 3/2.

Keith Gristwood v Brian Jackson

Another tight game, Brian played very well and upset Keith's rhythm, however Keith went on to win 3/1.

William Jappy v Peter Shivas

William has a very high loop serve which Peter initially had problems dealing with, but eventually overcame William, comfortably winning 3/0.

### Semi Final

Robin Ridley v John Charles

John tried very hard to stop Robin playing his usual game. The first game was close with Robin winning. The next two games John was not able to sustain the effort and lost 3/0.

Keith Gristwood v Peter Shivas

Peter played an excellent game not allowing Keith in it at all. With Peter playing it very tight Keith had difficulty returning ball to length. Peter went on to win 3/0.

### Final

Robin Ridley v Peter Shivas

Robin had just lost a par 11 semi final in the O55s to Chris Holt - that can't have helped.

Some very good rallies at the front - about evenly split. Peter managed a slightly better length than usual, and forced Robin further back. This allowed Peter more time to catch Robin by delaying the shot and changing direction. Peter won the first but Robin fought back to take the second. However Peter proved to be the stronger player and closed the match out in four games to win the O60 title.

Plate

In the Plate semi finals Bryan Jackson beat Lance Marshall 3/0 and David McAleese beat William Jappy 3/1. Bryan gave David a walkover and David won the Plate.

## **MO65**

After an initial entry of 14, this reduced to 12 after a couple of call-offs but was still a healthy entry.

On Saturday morning there were four first round ties. In the first match Emilio Fazzi played Mattie Crawford and Emilio comfortably won the first game. However Emilio was troubled again with a muscle injury and had had to retire and Mattie progressed to the second round. In the other three matches Ian Ross, Dave Sturman and Ernie Cowell had comfortable 3/0 wins over Brian Duffy, Jim Webster and Warren Cameron. Having turned 70 recently Warren was also playing in the O70 event for the first time.

John Howie, an excellent all round racket player, particularly tennis but also a very good squash player from Whitecraigs entered the tournament for the first time in a few years. The Tournament Committee researched his current form and made him first seed for the West Masters.

The quarter finals were played on Saturday afternoon and the line up was John Howie v Walter McAllister, Ian Ross v Mattie Crawford, Dave Sturman v Ernie Cowell and Jim Dougal v Mike Mooney.

In the first match John showed his class and beat a competitive Walter 3/0 and Ian had a 3/0 win over Mattie. The other two quarter finals were much tighter matches. Having won the recent Grampian Masters, Dave was the favourite to beat Ernie and he started well by winning the first game. However Ernie tightened up his game and with good serving and good width and length to his drives won the next three games and moved into the semi final. Mike Mooney, who plays out of the Perth Squash Club and has recently turned 70, is a Welsh Masters International who regularly plays on the Scottish Masters circuit. Jim started well with his deft drops and boasts and won the first two games 15-12 and 15/10. Mike showed his fighting spirit by winning the third game 15/12. The fourth game was 'nip and tuck' all the way before Jim closed the game out 15/12 and progressed into the semi final.

The semi finals were played at lunchtime on Sunday with John Howie against Ian Ross and Jim Dougal against Ernie Cowell. John started well against Ian and with his strong backhand drives and drops comfortably won the first game. In the second game Ian fought back and played much better squash and forced some errors from John. With Ian leading 13/9 it looked as though the game was heading towards 1/1 – but John had other ideas and won the next six points and took the game to lead 2/0. He continued his good form and won the third game and the match 3/0. Ernie beat Jim in the Tayside and Fife Masters at the beginning of the season so Jim was seeking revenge. Jim came out of the blocks very quickly and did not allow Ernie to settle and quickly took a 2/0 lead. Ernie finally wakened up and started competing and won the third game. Jim has had a number of niggling injuries this season and there were question marks as to whether he could be competitive over four or five games? The

match did go the distance and Jim did prove his fitness but Ernie completed his comeback by winning both of the last two very competitive games 15/12!

In the Plate competition there were four competitors namely Walter McAllister, Jim Webster, Mattie Crawford and Brian Duffy. The West Committee made a sensible decision to allow Mattie to compete in the Plate although he has a first round win after Emilio retired injured after one game. Walter beat Jim 3/1 and Brian beat Mattie 3/0 to reach his first Plate final. In the final Ernie and a comfortable 3/0 win over Brian.

There was a relatively short rest for John and Ernie before they met in the final. Had Ernie any fuel left in the tank after his long five game semi final against Jim? John started very strong and quickly won the first game and with Ernie struggling to compete John comfortably won the next two games and the O65 West Masters title. John clearly demonstrated his #1 seeding in winning the title. He is keen to play at least another two Masters events next year and hopes to qualify for the Home Internationals in May.

In this season's three events there have been three different winners in Emilio Fazzi, Dave Sturman and John Howie with Ernie Cowell runner up in two finals and Ian Ross runner up in the other. There is plenty to play for in the remaining three tournaments next year!

## **MO70**

There were 11 competitors and the competition was played as a knock out.

We welcomed three new players, George Dinnin, and 'promoted' O65 players Alex Sinclair and Warren Cameron.

### Saturday

#### First rounds

John Mortimer v Andy Duff

John playing measured squash put up a fight against Andy's dynamic attacking play, which proved too much. Andy won 15/10 in all three games.

Result Andy won 3-0

Alfie Thomson v George Dinnin

Two tall men, playing similar styles, Alfie started well and showed better touch play and won the first two games 15/8 and 15/11. George got into his game using his power service to force Alfie on the back foot and took the third 15/5.

Alfie regained his composure and went on to take the next game 15-10.

Result Alfie won 3-1

#### Quarter finals

George Stirrat v Andy Duff

Andy had no answers to George's power and controlled squash, George taking the match 15/8, 15/4, 15/4.

Result George won 3-0



Warren Cameron v Bernard Starkey

Warren's match with Bernard was exceptionally close, after the second game the match got interesting.

A match of contrasting styles, with Warren using his service and touch play to frustrate Bernard, he took the first games 15/12 and 16/14. Bernard rallied in the third and was in control with better variety to his play, taking third game 15-12. Continuing this play into the fourth during which Warren pulled up with a leg injury - play continued and Bernard easily took the game 15/5 to level the match at 2/2. Warren took an early lead in fifth and Bernard lost concentration and the game went to Warren 15-13.

Result Warren won 3-2

Alex Sinclair v Ken Reid

This was a pretty even match. Alex won the first game but with Ken almost taking the second game, he was up 12-6 at one stage - but lost it 13-15 to go 0-2 down. Ken won the third game 15-12, but could not keep the momentum going and Alex was a fairly comfortable winner in the fourth.

Result Alex won 3-1

Tom Kane v Alf Thomson

Tom had been successful in all previous meetings between the two, although in the Grampian Masters, Alf had found good form and lost 3-2 in a closely fought match. This time, Tom was on his home turf, and the warm courts did not suit Alf's drop and touch game.

Result Tom ran out a comfortable 3-0 win.

Plate

Bernard Starkey v George Dinnin

Bernard made short work in this match with George having no answers to movement and control.

Result Bernard won 3-0

Sunday

Semi-finals

George Stirrat v Warren Cameron

The semi-final between George and Warren was a one-sided affair, as Warren was still feeling the effects from the injury to his leg from his earlier match against Bernard. This limited his movement around court, giving George an easy win.

Result George won 3-0

Tom Kane v Alex Sinclair

Alex, newly stepped up from the O65s and was playing his first Masters in the O70s. First game was 'nip and tuck' all the way with Tom always edging ahead until 13 - 13 when Alex got hand in and Tom put both returns down to give Alex the first game. The second game was again hotly contested, but Alex's good movement around court worked well and gave him the second and a 2-0 lead. In third game, Tom warmed to the task and began to stretch the rallies out - Alex took a substantial lead, but Tom's

pace around court began to take its toll on Alex's stamina, and he began to tire, and allowed Tom to fight back and win 15-13. Alex found his second wind in the fourth game, and some excellent squash from both players saw a hotly contested game. However a combination of uncharacteristic mistakes from Tom gave Alex some easy points, on which he capitalised and then played some good solid squash to clinch the match 3-1.

#### Final

George Stirrat v Alex Sinclair

After a close first game 16-14 to George, it was really no contest, because George played really well in games 2 and 3 and Alex looked tired out after his long battle with Tom in the semi final.

Result George won 3-0, to take yet another regional Over 70s title.

#### Plate

In the semi-finals of the Plate, Bernard Starkey and Ken Reid had wins over George Dinnin and John Mortimer, and moved onto the final.

#### Plate Final

Bernard was a convincing winner, with his consistent play.

Result Bernard won 3-0.

#### **Dates for your Diary**

East Masters – Edinburgh Sports Club – 19/20 January 2019

Central Regional Masters – Bridge of Allan Sports Club - 9/10 February 2019

Scottish National Masters – Inverness Squash Club - 15/17 March 2019

For details of all 2018/19 Masters Tournaments see SRRA website